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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives

Statement submitted by Santé de la reproduction pour une maternité sans risque, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Please recycle

Statement

Theme: "*Access and participation of women and girls to education, training, science and technology, including for the promotion of women's equal access to full employment and decent work*"

1. The concepts of education and development are closely linked in the context of the desire for survival and for a harmonious life: education is a process that allows human beings to develop their capacities in order to reach their potential; development makes these capacities and potential available for use.

2. In order to maintain progress towards all the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (DPRS), including gender equality and empowerment of women, there must be greater emphasis on access of girls to education.

3. It is increasingly obvious that the education of girls prevents intergenerational transmission of poverty and promotes progress towards the MDGs and the DPRS, including reduction of maternal and child mortality and access to decent employment. Educated women have fewer children and are more inclined to send them to school. There is a correlation between mothers' education and the reduction of maternal and child mortality and morbidity.

4. Secondary education allows the enjoyment of other rights, by enabling girls to benefit from social and economic development. Studies have shown that women with more years of schooling earn 10 to 20 per cent more.

5. A major obstacle to girls' school enrolment and to their completion of their studies is the violence to which they are subjected at school and on the way to school. The presence of female teachers may reduce the incidence of violence and create safer school environments for girls. In sub-Saharan Africa, the presence of female teachers results in enrolment of more girls in primary school.

6. It is crucial to ensure that girls receive quality education. Outdated curricula depicting women in subservient roles accentuate gender inequalities. It is essential for the attainment of the MDGs for women to have access to employment and control of the land, because this will reduce poverty and enhance food security. However, access to these resources also has important benefits for women: by controlling the land, women can achieve a more secure livelihood and improved access to other resources, including credit and other financial products, seeds and agricultural extension services. In rural communities, the land has a symbolic as well as an economic value, contributing to the status of women within their communities. When they earn their own income, women have a greater say in decision-making in the couple and can be less exposed to domestic violence. Yet many women are denied both decent work and control of the land.

7. For example, globally women provide from 70 to 90 per cent of care for persons living with HIV and AIDS, so that their work supplements inadequate health systems but is generally not recognized or supported. In the Niger, access to education may be measured by two indicators: the number of newly enrolled pupils and the gross enrolment ratio.

8. In 2007-2008, new enrolments in the first year of primary school (kindergarten) numbered 342,360. The figure was 158,600 in 2000-2001, giving an

average annual increase of 10 per cent. New enrolments of girls numbered 155,057 compared with 187,303 for boys. The percentage of girls enrolled thus increased from 40.7 per cent in 2000 to 45 per cent in 2008. The improvement in girls' enrolment is encouraging.

9. The gross enrolment ratio (number of children of any age enrolled in primary school compared with the number of school-age children multiplied by 100) was 63 per cent in 2007-2008 compared with 34 per cent in 1999-2008, representing a remarkable increase of 29 percentage points. In 2007-2008, the gross enrolment ratio was 54 per cent for girls, compared with 72 per cent for boys. Although the gross enrolment ratio for girls increased steadily (41 per cent for boys and 27 per cent for girls in 1999/2000, the gap in the gross enrolment ratio between girls and boys widened, increasing from 14 to 20 percentage points and then dropping to 18 percentage points in 2007-2008. This two-point reduction is basically due to the narrowing of the gap in first-year enrolment ratios. The gross enrolment ratio in rural areas increased sharply, reducing the difference between places of residence from 19 percentage points in 2000-2001 to 15 percentage points in 2007-2008.

10. Despite the progress made in girls' schooling, the absolute gap between girls and boys widened and girls are somewhat less successful than boys. The disparities are accentuated between primary education, where they account for almost half the students, and the second cycle of secondary education, where they represent only one fifth of the student body.

11. There are many kinds of vocational education and training. In 2007-2008, there were 13,379 students, or 8 per cent of secondary school pupils, attending institutions providing technical and vocational training. There were 7,222 girls (54 per cent) compared with 6,157 boys (46 per cent).

12. In 2006-2007, the target population for this type of education was estimated to be 294,546 pupils. The proportion of enrolments in vocational and technical secondary education and training was 2.5 per cent in 2004-2005. In 2007-2008, only 31 and 23 per cent were pursuing studies in the tertiary and industrial sectors. Girls accounted for 38.5 per cent of enrolments in the tertiary sector compared with 8.5 per cent in the industrial sector.

13. The very high cost of this type of education, the theoretical nature of the studies and the lack of immediate openings and of professional networks to enable graduates to set up their own business are probably responsible for this downward trend. As far as higher education is concerned, in 2007-2008 enrolment at the country's two universities was: 9,500 students (17 per cent girls) at the Université Abdou Moumouni in Niamey and 1,050 students (18 per cent girls) at the Université Islamique in Say.

14. In both urban and rural areas, there is generally very little Internet use, particularly by women and children. All these elements, particularly in remote parts of the country, are limiting factors for women and children. In 2008, there was almost no use of computers by children aged between 7 and 12, and 0.4 per cent among children between 13 and 18 years of age. Home computers are rare and almost non-existent. In 2004, less than 1 per cent of households owned one.

15. There is a very wide gap between men and women in the economic sphere. Analysis of the situation of women as regards equitable development reveals a number of negative trends that are obstructing the efforts made on their behalf. It is

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Statement submitted by World Youth Alliance, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Please recycle

Statement*

Intrinsic dignity of the human person and the Millennium Development Goals

1. The recognition that all human beings have intrinsic dignity is the only foundation for human rights. It is the intrinsic worth of the human person that provides the basis on which to found policies and laws that create conditions under which human beings can flourish. Without such a foundation, human rights are articulated and enforced based upon the subjective preferences of those in power, thus undermining the entire human rights project and leading to violations of human rights.

2. The World Youth Alliance recognizes the necessity of educating and training women and girls in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). We believe that recognizing the interdependent relationship between the development goals leads to their achievement. Every violation of human rights is an obstacle to the full achievement of the MDGs by 2015. In particular, women's lack of access to health care, shelter, education, participation and protection still hampers progress towards the MDGs.

3. Empowerment of women and girls brings about reduced family poverty, increased health and reduced child mortality. The opposite is true when the State does not invest in their health and education. Although there have been some successes, notably in Brazil — Bolsa Familia — and Mexico — Oportunidades — enrolment of girls in school is lower in developing countries than in developed countries.

4. The World Youth Alliance will analyse and propose improvements for the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the light of the dignity of the human person. Specifically, we will address the relationship between education, development and poverty reduction as it relates to equality between women and men.

Access of women and girls to education

5. Millennium Development Goal 2 (Education) claims that children everywhere shall be able to achieve a full course of primary schooling. MDG 2 recognizes that education is a primary factor in overall human development. Achieving this development goal is especially important for girls, as education helps to reduce the risks of trafficking vulnerability, cycles of poverty through generations, rape and sexual exploitation.

6. Poverty, undernourishment and unemployment are the primary factors that prevent girls from finishing primary school. The lack of stability in developing countries' households forces girls and women to either work or marry early. By improving the situation of girl children living in poverty, deprived of nutrition, water and sanitation facilities, with no access to basic health-care services, shelter, education, participation and protection, the dropout rates will be reduced. And, by eliminating school abandonment, the girl child will be empowered. There have been mechanisms in some developing countries such as Brazil which have implemented programmes that provide income support to poor families, subject to their having

* Issued without formal editing.

fulfilled certain human development requirements, such as child school attendance, participation in supplementary socio-educational activities, vaccinations, nutritional monitoring and prenatal and post-natal tests. These types of programmes, and other creative solutions, should be encouraged in all countries.

7. Early and forced marriage, as well as early sexual debut, hampers girls' access to education. Early pregnancy and childbearing are often impediments to improvements in the educational, economic and social status of women in all parts of the world. Early pregnancy and early motherhood can entail complications during pregnancy and childbirth. In developed and developing countries, the trend towards early sexual experience undermines efforts to fight HIV and other STIs. Forced marriage also has adverse physical and psychological effects on girls, when it includes threatening behaviour, abduction, imprisonment, physical and sexual violence, rape and even murder.

8. The World Youth Alliance stresses the importance of preventing all forms of violence against the girl child, including physical, mental, psychological and sexual violence. Occurring both in families and at school, torture, child abuse and exploitation, hostage-taking, domestic violence and paedophilia are all human rights violations in themselves, and, when experienced, further hinder girls' access to education and their human development. These problems will be solved through promoting the benefit of education both in families and at school and through the creation of appropriate, innovative, targeted programmes that go beyond the current legal frameworks to form and create awareness in girls, boys, parents, families, local communities, political, religious and traditional leaders and educational institutions.

9. It is well known that poverty eradication is not the only factor that will lower dropout rates for girls. In fact, this will be unachievable without first educating both boys and girls about equality and intrinsic dignity. Respect for the girl child's right to education starts at the earliest stages of life. Population policies that seek to control fertility inevitably lead to discrimination against the girl child through prenatal sex selection, sex-selective abortion and infanticide. In developed and developing countries, education to understand the intrinsic value of both women and men and to promote equal sharing of responsibilities, in both formal and informal work, should be encouraged. This education should focus on the inherent value of caregiving and other responsibilities that have typically been undertaken by women and girls, and that promote human flourishing, interconnectedness, and the basis for building strong families at the heart of society.

The role of the family in education

10. The World Youth Alliance affirms that the fundamental group unit of human society is the family, where women and men learn to live in genuine freedom and solidarity. Although the State has a duty to provide access to education, no institution can assume the role of the family as primary educator, because the biological and sociological ties between family members cannot be replicated. It is within the family that children first learn that they have intrinsic value, that responsibilities should be shared, and that human beings, no matter what their situation or condition, should be respected. The family prepares the individual to access society and is the place where individuals are equipped to fulfil their social obligations.

11. It is for these reasons that we believe the political community at the local, national and international levels is obliged to protect and nurture the family. The child has a right to be known and cared for by his or her parents, for instance, and so the State has the duty to create legal and political structures that encourage family unity. Studies[1] demonstrate that both father and mother are fundamental to the development of the human person and that human beings have a deep need to know the fullness of their identity. Therefore, the State must ensure that new reproductive technologies are regulated in a way that promotes full disclosure of ancestral history to children.

[1] Frank A. Pedersen, *The Father-Infant Relationship: Observational Studies in a Family Setting* (New York: Praeger, 1980); Michael W. Yogman, "Games Fathers and Mothers Play with Their Infants", *Infant Mental Health Journal* 2 (1981): 241-248; Paul Amato, "Father-Child Relations, Mother-Child Relations, and Offspring Psychological Well-Being in Early Adulthood", *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 56 (1994): 1031-1042; Cheryl Buehler, Mark J. Benson, and Jean M. Gerard, "Interparental Hostility and Early Adolescent Problem Behavior: The Mediating Role of Specific Aspects of Parenting", *Journal of Research on Adolescence* 16, No. 2 (2006): 265-292.

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Statement submitted by Sociologists for Women in Society, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Please recycle

Statement*

School fees must be abolished to reach universal primary education

1. The 2000 United Nations Millennium Summit challenged the world's nations to reach universal primary education for all children (MDG 2) and to eliminate gender disparities at all educational levels (MDG 3) by 2015. Yet sixty-nine million children are still not in school, and in sub-Saharan Africa, 48 per cent of children do not complete primary school. About two thirds of these children are girls. School fees present an insurmountable barrier for the parents of girls and contribute greatly to the number of children out of school.

School fees prevent the most vulnerable children, especially poor rural girls, from enrolling in school

2. In some poor rural areas no more than 10 or 15 per cent of girls are enrolled in school. Children in poor families may have to spend part of their time in informal work earning their own school fees, taking time away from their studies. Poor parents delay their children's entrance into school or trade the education of one child for another when they do not have funds for school fees. When families encounter financial difficulties such as an illness requiring medicine, a girl's school fees are easily diverted.

3. There is a strong correlation between increases in school fees and the incidence of school dropouts. Even small fees prevent the most vulnerable children from being able to attend school. School fees are highly regressive in the sense that they prevent the poorest children from attending, reserving scarce public resources for children whose families are able to afford the school fees.

Poverty is perpetuated by the imposition of school fees

4. In some areas, as much as 25 per cent of all household expenditures are spent on school fees when two students or more are in the household. Families go into debt for school fees to lenders who charge usurious rates of 50 per cent per month. School fees divert income away from food and small businesses. Uneducated women earn less and often must choose whether to support their families or pay for their children's school fees. Illiterate women work for meagre wages at the lowest levels of employment and cannot reinvest their irregular modest profits to develop their small business because they need to pay for their children's school fees. This reinforces a cycle of poverty. It is estimated that 171 million people could be lifted out of poverty if they left school with basic literacy skills.

School costs force poor parents to choose between the education of their sons and their daughters

5. In patrilocal societies, where girls leave their natal family to become part of their husband's family, there are fewer benefits to poor families from educating daughters since they do not bring income into the family. Older sisters in poor families are particularly at risk of not continuing their education because their labour is needed at home. A study of China showed that girls must compete with their brothers for their parents' investment in education expenses. In rural areas of China, 80 per cent of girls (and 60 per cent of boys) are not in school, despite the

* Issued without formal editing.

requirement of universal education. Even in prosperous regions of China, three fourths of school dropouts are girls. In the 1990s, having a brother reduced a girl's chances of attending senior high school or college.

School fees result in less educated mothers and less healthy families

6. Educated mothers tend to have healthier families. When girls are not educated, the long-term result is that their families have poorer nutrition and suffer more illnesses. The problem is particularly acute for orphaned girls who have great difficulty getting an education and are likely to be uneducated as mothers. Providing every mother with a secondary education would save the lives of 1.8 million children every year. Yet a lack of funding prevents poor families from sending their daughters on to secondary school.

School fees make the lives of female AIDS orphans more difficult

7. School fees are a significant problem in the care of AIDS orphans. Grandmothers who care for their orphaned grandchildren struggle to find the money for school fees. Without money for school fees, AIDS orphans must forego school and earn their living on the streets in informal work. Orphaned girls may find a "sugar daddy" to pay their school fees in exchange for sexual favours, placing girls in the difficult position of trading their privacy, virtue, and health for their schooling.

School fee abolition benefits all children, especially poor children, in low-income countries

8. A number of low-income countries have taken bold, positive steps to reduce fees as called for in the 2000 Dakar Framework for Action. Sub-Saharan Africa's gross enrolment rate (GER) grew to 97 per cent in 2005, a 36 per cent increase in enrolment over six years. Dramatic gains in primary school enrolment were made when school fees were abolished in sub-Saharan countries, a 68 per cent increase in Uganda, 51 per cent in Malawi, 26 per cent in Cameroon, and 23 per cent in the United Republic of Tanzania. In countries that have abolished school fees, enrolment of children in the lowest quintile has increased dramatically so that poor children are the main beneficiaries of school fee abolition. In Malawi, for instance, the net enrolment ratio for children in the poorest quintile was only 33 per cent in 1990; following school fee abolition, the ratio increased to 76 per cent in 1997.

Without school fee abolition, the goal of universal primary school completion by 2015 will not be met

9. The large majority of countries in sub-Saharan Africa are at risk of not reaching universal primary school completion by 2015. The United Republic of Tanzania was the only major sub-Saharan country to reach universal primary school completion by 2005. To help children complete primary school, school fee abolition must be combined with broad programmes to maintain educational quality such as increased numbers of teachers, teacher manuals, and teacher training. Governments need to lower indirect school costs such as uniforms, textbooks and informal fees. To provide funding for these improvements, capitation grants that provide a per-pupil amount have proven effective in replacing school fees while providing access for vulnerable groups, including poor rural girls, the disabled and orphans.

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Statement submitted by Guild of Service, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Please recycle

Statement*

1. In our submission to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women at its fifty-fifth session, the Guild of Service, India, raises critical trends and patterns of concern regarding equal access and participation of widows and their daughters in education and employment for discussion and inclusion in the agreed conclusions:

- Over three quarters of a billion widows and their children live in extreme poverty (one ninth (11 per cent) of the world's population), leading widows to desperate "choices" to feed children, particularly pulling them, particularly daughters, out of school into arranged early marriages and other exploitative situations (begging, child labour, even trafficking).
- Huge and unprecedented recent increases in the numbers of widows are due to increased armed conflicts, ethnic cleansing, HIV/AIDS, "natural" disasters and other negative impacts of climate change and the persistence of harmful traditional practices, such as early marriage and forced marriages.
- More widows increase families living in extreme poverty because discriminatory customs and laws, including lack of inheritance, land and property rights, and expulsion from the marital home, propel many widows into poverty.
- Widows, primarily in rural sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia, face harmful traditional practices such as discrimination, marginalization, mourning rituals which restrict personal autonomy and the mainstreaming of widows economically and socially. Countries legislating against discrimination against widows tend not to enforce such laws.
- Social exclusion of widows has severe economic consequences, additional to that of other women:
    - o While all women are unable to own land or property in certain countries, exacerbating the economics of women in households without adult men, widows are additionally feared as "unlucky", "witches", or causing their husband's death, and ostracized, making it harder for them to find ways to feed their families. Property inheritance laws by tradition and custom discriminate against widows.
    - o While all women are likely to be under-employed and less well paid in comparison to men, exacerbating the economics of all women in households without adult men, widows are additionally constrained from pursuing education, job training or employment by mourning rites requiring widows to remain inside for up to one year or more or an unwritten behaviour code.
    - o Expulsion of widows and their children from a marital home leads many to homelessness, migration, refugee or displacement camps and increased physical insecurity, since widows are often unwelcome in natal homes.
    - o Widows in certain rural areas are forced to marry a male relative of their deceased husband ("widow inheritance" or "levirate marriage").

* Issued without formal editing.

- o Social isolation and avoidance of widows often leads widows to miss training, employment, health care, education and other information and opportunities.
- o Widows and their children face increased gender-based violence in conflict-affected areas as women without the protection of men.

- Removal of daughters from school for early marriage generates a cycle as daughters become uneducated widows replicating mothers' "choices" for *their* children.

2. Education being a primary mechanism for escaping poverty, it is essential that Governments address the social and economic conditions of widowhood, using all measures to afford widows their rights to education, training and employment, and protect the rights of widows' children to attend school. In particular, we seek to:

- Implement the agreements reached at the fifty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women to disaggregate data by marital status as well as gender and age, not only in HIV/AIDS, but also to monitor progress of widows and their children: research on widowhood as a root cause of girls out-of-school and girl dropouts, and include data on child brides, child mothers, child heads of household, and child widows, widowed families living within extended families, and marital status of parents of children at risk (both girls and boys) to identify the disproportionate number who are children of widows.
- Combat legal, customary and traditional discrimination in inheritance laws and property rights and usage rights.
- Implement the outcome of the forty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women to challenge stigmatization and discriminatory attitudes, and include Widowhood, developing campaigns for new standards of behaviour and attitudes towards marriage, the value of education for girls, women's right to work, women's right to inherit and own land, and other human rights.
- Fund widows' groups to ensure widows and their children are informed of education and employment programming, including those who cannot read.
- Design education and training for the hard-to-reach, including widows and their children, particularly those in hiding, homeless, in transit, refugee, internally displaced or humanitarian relief camps, living with disabilities, or otherwise too distant. Plan contingencies for power outages, particularly in rural areas, if strategies involve mobile phones or computers.
- Design retention supports for widows and their children, including childcare at school for children of student mothers and for students after school.
- Ensure that programming for out-of-school youth includes widows and the children of widows.
- Provide rights education and life skills training to parents, including widows, as well as students, and include the rights of widows and other women living without adult men in curricular material.

3. Progress on the agreed conclusions of the fifty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women, "The elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child", is incomplete until girl widows and the daughters of

widows are included in policies, programmes, outreach, monitoring and data collection. To redress this:

- Redefine campaigns combating child marriage to include child brides becoming child widows and widow inheritance, since inherited widows may still be children.
- Implement paragraph 13 of the agreed conclusions of the fifty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women calling on Governments to include widows and their children:
    - o Ensure harmful laws include inheritance, land and property laws and other discrimination against widows, including social exclusion (13f).
    - o Develop countrywide birth, death, and marriage registries (13j). Since marriage is the greatest source of HIV infection risk for women, use such registries to target married men, and their wives, former wives (widows, divorced, abandoned) and other sexual partners, requiring both husband and wife, or father and mother, to attend sessions during registration covering HIV/AIDS transmission and prevention, reproductive health, family planning, nutrition, and the importance and availability of birth attendants.
    - o Ensure country reports to the United Nations include marital status and other data on households without adult men (13j).
- Explicitly include widowhood, daughters of widows, girl widows, marital status and households without adult men in:
    - o Every subsection of paragraph 14.
    - o Paragraph 15: encouraging treaty bodies to invite States to address the situation of girls.
    - o The financial commitments of paragraphs 16 and 17.
- Include widowhood as a key paragraph 18 component of the issues facing girls.

4. More generally, we seek support for:

- A United Nations special report on widowhood in conflict collaborating with widows' organizations modelled on the Machel report on children in conflict.
- A United Nations Special Rapporteur on Widowhood.
- The United Nations, Governments' and Donors' funding of widows' groups to represent widows collectively in decision-making, peace negotiations, and on committees for constitutional and law reform; forming widows' groups where none exist.
- Naming the knowledge gap on widows as a major obstacle to gender equality, human rights and the Millennium Development Goals.
- Including marital status in United Nations five-year questionnaires to develop member country profile statistics, disaggregating gender data by marginalized population and marginalized population data by gender.

- Funding alternate data-collection methods (e.g., national mapping and profiling projects), since conventional census methods inadequately capture data on widows.
- The United Nations through the various organizations must make it incumbent on State parties to acknowledge and document various forms of discrimination against widows. State parties must make available surveyed data on all forms of social and economic discrimination of widows.
- A "general recommendation" of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women urging State parties to address widowhood issues in their own countries and questionnaires on widowhood.
- "Widows" as a United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 national action plan implementation category.
- United Nations conferences in Africa and Asia in 2011-2013, on widowhood, human rights, poverty and justice, based on United Nations and international development agency (Commonwealth Secretariat, World Bank) findings on widowhood.
- Mainstreaming widowhood issues into all international and regional policy meetings, including all conferences on human rights, HIV/AIDS, trafficking, peace and security, violence against women, poverty eradication, and least developed countries to effectively implement United Nations system goals.

5. We wish to acknowledge our sister organization Widows for Peace through Democracy and its Founder Director, Margaret Owen, for her support in the writing of this submission.

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Statement submitted by the National Women's Council of Catalonia, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Please recycle

Statement*

1. The Platform for Action of the Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women contains six strategic objectives concerning education, which are covered below, and which our statement will address.

2. Our society requires education of individuals to be directed towards the development of free, responsible, autonomous and cooperative citizens, in order to produce a real and fundamental transformation of our society, put an end to discrimination, respect differences and empower people to live together in freedom and peace. One of the goals of the educational system, and all training activities, is to ensure that all students have equal access, opportunities and treatment in education, regardless of their gender or any other social or personal condition or circumstance.

3. The objective of ensuring equal access to education by girls and boys and men and women appears to have been met as far as compulsory education is concerned, which in Catalonia, Spain, goes up to 16 years of age. The percentages of women and men enrolled in compulsory primary and secondary education are very similar, but at the *bachillerato* level girls make up 54.3 per cent of students. At university level the most recent data indicates that the number of women enrolled and earning degrees is higher than the number of men in all fields except technical studies, management and sports. As a whole, women spend more years than men in the educational system and have slightly higher enrolment rates.

4. It should be noted that not all areas of Catalonia, Spain, have the same guaranteed access to education. Rural and mountainous areas with low population density have less access to education and have deficiencies in transportation, school canteens or other educational services that in practice are made up by the women of the communities, thereby increasing their burden of care. Access to university education is also more difficult for women who live in communities at some distance from a university. Nor is equal access to education guaranteed to girls and women with disabilities.

5. The participation of women and men in the teaching profession shows a distinct imbalance. Women are in the majority among teachers in compulsory education, mainly in early childhood and primary schools, where they make up 87 per cent of the total. In secondary education that percentage drops to 57.9 and is even lower among university professors. The lower representation of women as the level of education rises holds true throughout the teaching profession, with fewer women in the higher ranks. The statistical data disaggregated by gender needed to monitor these indicators is provided by various government institutions.

6. The objective of eradicating illiteracy among women has basically been reached in Catalonia, Spain. The expansion of primary education over the last few decades has reduced illiteracy in the strictest sense to a small percentage of women. The illiteracy rate is higher among older and disabled women. At any rate, as in other countries, the literacy rate for adult men (98.9 per cent) is still higher than the rate for women (97.3 per cent).

* Issued without formal editing.

7. Functional illiteracy is much higher, but no gender-disaggregated data is available to evaluate it. Nor can we forget so-called digital or technological illiteracy — the gender digital divide — which must be taken into account even more in meeting the demands of society and the labour market.

8. The objective of improving women's access to vocational training, science and technology and continuing education is far from being achieved. This reality contrasts with the fact that women obtain the majority of outstanding scores in the *bachillerato* and have higher scores on university entrance exams. Although in principle they have more possibilities in choosing a course of study because of their better results, they continue to be underrepresented in technical fields. The number of women in vocational training courses and university degrees in technological and scientific fields is a good deal lower than that of men. The degrees with the lowest number of women are telecommunications, industrial and computer engineering. This situation is a reflection of professional discrimination against women. In the job market women still face great difficulties in sectors and professions traditionally and stereotypically considered to be male. Some universities, like the Polytechnic University of Catalonia, have specific programmes to attract more women to technical fields where they are underrepresented. Women scientists also face restrictions in their professional careers, reflected in their lower representation in the higher ranks.

9. The objective of developing non-discriminatory education and training is covered in the Equality Act of 2007, which stipulates the inclusion of obligatory gender content in study plans for all university degrees. In practice university degrees are granted without the fulfilment of this requirement, and it is very difficult to set up a curriculum offering required or elective courses designed from a gender perspective and/or with gender content.

10. As for mixed schools, it can be said that they are generally available in Catalonia, Spain, both at the primary and the secondary levels, although there are still a small number of private schools segregated by sex. However, enrolment in a single universal educational system for both sexes coexists with unequal relationships between boys and girls, perpetuating inequality and differences among students on the basis of sex. The *Institut Catala de les Dones*, which includes coeducation among the objectives of the Women's Policy Plan of the Government of the Generalitat of Catalonia (2008-2011), has published educational materials and offers training on coeducation. The Department of Education of the Generalitat of Catalonia has developed a gender policy and equal opportunity plan (2008-2011) and has a coeducation programme which is applied in some fifty primary and secondary schools throughout Catalonia.

11. The current context of the global economic crisis and widespread cuts in services also affects resources available for education. Therefore, the objective of allocating sufficient resources for and monitoring the implementation of educational reforms is not being achieved and all indications are that resources will continue to decline in the future. It should be noted that the percentage of the GDP of Catalonia, Spain, allocated to education before the economic crisis was still below the average for Spain and Europe and there is no indication that this ranking can change in the coming years.

12. Lastly, as for the objective of promoting lifelong education and training for girls and women, more women than men are involved in adult education, but this

data is directly related to the fact that the rate of illiteracy among women still remains higher.

13. Despite the progress noted in some of the objectives, there are still many issues concerning education for girls and women that should be given priority attention. We therefore request the following:

- A gender perspective should be integrated in all actions of educational administrations: construction, signs, budgets, convocations, surveys, statistics and training activities.
- All educational establishments, from nursery school through university, should incorporate a gender perspective in their educational activities in order to build a more equal society based on coexistence and mutual respect.
- The necessary actions should be undertaken to reduce the remaining gender inequalities among studies, educational phases and members of the teaching profession.
- Access to education should be guaranteed for all girls and women, whatever their place of residence, origin, disability, beliefs, etc.
- Research on women and from a gender perspective should be conducted in universities and research centres.
- The field of education should contribute to the eradication of violence against women and all forms of discrimination against them.
- The use of non-exclusive and non-sexist language should be guaranteed in all areas of education.

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Statement submitted by Company of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.6/2011/1.

10-66808 (E) 130111

Please recycle

Statement*

1. Statement endorsed by the International Presentation Association of the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Salesian Missions and Sisters of Charity Federation, NGOs in special consultative status with ECOSOC.

Education as a human right

2. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in article 26 states:

> "Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms."

3. The outcome document of the fifty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women, on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against the girl child, specified education, a basic human right, as an essential means for girls to reach their full potential.

4. The review theme of this session will focus on the progress made in ensuring girls the full enjoyment of their human rights, including the right to education. During the review, it is imperative that the root causes and barriers to gender parity in elementary and secondary schools be addressed. Obstacles to enrolment, retention and achievement must be identified and eliminated.

Gender disparity

5. Much progress has been made since 2000 towards achieving Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 2, to achieve universal primary education. UNICEF reports that in more than 60 developing countries at least 90 per cent of children are in primary school. However, the number of girls not attending elementary school remains disproportionately higher than the number of boys. The majority of children (worldwide, 54 per cent of the 72 million) who are out of school and who are illiterate are girls, thus MDG target 3.A, to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015, remains a serious challenge.

6. Social and cultural norms, extreme poverty, gender stereotypes, discriminatory laws and policies and gender roles with their expectations and obligations constitute root causes and barriers which prevent girls from attending primary and secondary schools.

7. Girls who live in extreme poverty are obliged to do much of the domestic work that enables poor families to survive. Carrying water, tending livestock, harvesting crops, gathering firewood, and caring for younger children are often the responsibility of the girl child who must spend much of her time in accomplishing these daily chores. Even if she were able to enrol in school, she is often obliged to drop out in order to have the time needed to fulfil her household responsibilities. It

* Issued without formal editing.

is estimated by the International Labour Organization that 218 million children worldwide, engage in some form of child labour.

Good practice

8. Both Morocco and Egypt can serve as examples of countries that have addressed both MDG 2 and MDG 3.A, by implementing institutional, socio-cultural and financial strategies to address the obstacles and barriers to universal education and the elimination of gender disparity in primary education.

Morocco

9. In 2000, Morocco established the Charter for Education and Training which focused on providing universal education and gradually making it compulsory in order to eliminate gender disparities, even in rural areas where the highest rates of gender disparity exist. In 2006, the Najah Emergency Plan was adopted to accelerate the implementation of the Charter and achieve its goals.

10. The main difficulties faced in implementing these measures were deeply embedded cultural gender stereotypes, attitudes towards girls and their education, low household incomes which forced children, especially girls, to seek work, and the needs of girls living in rural areas.

11. Morocco took specific measures to address some of these difficulties. For example, its discriminatory laws against women were revised. The nationality law now allows Moroccan mothers to give their nationality to their children. A gender-specific approach to resource allocation was adopted in the national budget, and human rights and gender equality were promoted in the educational system and in long-term planning.

12. To address distance from school and safety issues of girls living in rural areas, provision has been made for transportation to and from school for them thus assuring their safety. As an incentive to address the need for girls who expected to participate in home tasks and income generating activities, flour and oil are distributed to parents who send their girls to school. To reduce dropout rates among girls coming from low income households school supplies are provided to girls attending school.

13. Schools, canteens and boarding schools have been constructed, teacher training concerning gender issues and the adoption of a gender-specific and human rights approach in textbooks are some of the practical means that are being used at the national level to achieve their goals.

Egypt

14. The National Girls' Education Initiative (GEI) launched in Egypt in 2000 following the Dakar Declaration on Accelerating Girls' Education and Gender Equality of the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) aimed to decrease the gender gap in primary education, improve the quality of education and achieve education for all by 2015. Based on a well developed plan which includes preparation, implementation and mainstreaming phases, it employs complementary strategies that address poverty, equity, empowerment, community and girls' participation, bottom-up planning, volunteerism, coordination and networking.

15. After the initial planning was completed, the government allocated significant monies to implement the plan which included the construction of 1,076 nearby schools in the poorest and most difficult rural areas to reach which provide free, high-quality primary education. "Girl friendly" schools with adequate sanitation were built in villages where disparity between girls and boys attending school was the highest, and families were offered health insurance along with free education and school supplies as incentives for girls to attend school rather than work to support the family.

16. Cooperation among development partners, civil society, United Nations agencies, academic institutions, and citizens working together with the government has been an essential and key factor in the successes achieved up to now in both countries.

17. Eradicating culturally embedded causes of gender inequity is done only gradually over a long period of time, nonetheless significant progress has been made in providing girls access to education and in addressing the obstacles they encounter. Where there is a strong commitment to achieving gender equality, progress is made through long-term community engagement and cooperation with development partners, even within the most deprived and vulnerable populations and in countries where deeply rooted cultural and social customs can be serious barriers.

18. Recommendations to Governments:

- Ensure birth registration and national identity to all girls.
- Develop comprehensive long-term strategies to address deeply rooted cultural gender stereotypes and attitudes towards girls and their education.
- Eliminate all barriers to girls' access to education including school fees and lack of school supplies.
- Assure a safe environment for girls at school including adequate sanitation facilities.
- Provide transportation for girls living in rural areas and safety in travelling to and from school.
- Ensure the safety of girls attending school, both within the school premises and in travelling to and from school.
- Compensate parents who send their girls to school rather than obliging them to work to help support the family.
- Invest in teacher training and gender-sensitive curricula.
- Promote and support development partnerships for girls' education.

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Statement submitted by Women's National Commission, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.6/2011/1.

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Please recycle

Statement*

1. The Women's National Commission (WNC) is the national, official independent advisory body on women of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The WNC has over 670 partner organizations and individual partners including women's organizations in the European Union and United Kingdom based international organizations. The United Kingdom Government has announced as part of its Spending Review in the context of the global financial crisis to move towards greater localism and less centralized government, to abolish many non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs) including the WNC. The Government of the United Kingdom however has restated its commitment to the principles of women's advancement and equality.

2. The WNC welcome the fifty-fifth Commission on the Status of Women session focus on access and participation of women and girls to education, training, science and technology, including for the promotion of women's equal access to full employment and decent work. Despite many existing human rights instruments, internationally agreed goals and commitments to address gender inequality in this area, it remains broadly an ongoing challenge steeped in discrimination evidently more so in the gender disparity in access to and participation in science, engineering and technology (SET).

3. Access to education is widely recognized as the gateway to economic security and opportunity, particularly for girls and women. It is cited in international development discourse that educated women are more likely to delay marriage, enjoy better health and participate in family decisions. Access to education has increased globally for girls at all levels, and particularly in primary education, over the last decade. Nevertheless, women's educational attainment does not necessarily translate into improved employment opportunities particularly in SET fields. Among the 20 to 24 year-old population, women continue to lag behind men in labour force participation in all regions. Women, who find employment, whether in the informal or formal sector, also face many challenges, including over-representation in vulnerable employment and wage differentials. The creation of UN Women is a positive step in ensuring that specific actions to address these issues are taken forward.

Evidence of the situation in the United Kingdom

4. Since the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) in 1995, there have been a number of developments across the United Kingdom to improve educational and training opportunities for women, to tackle the causes of occupational segregation, to increase access to education training and employment for women in their multiple identities and investment to increase women's employment in SET and mathematics, information technology, electronics and the construction industries. Following devolution there have been national policy objectives across the four nations (England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland), so the following list is not exhaustive, however major developments have included:

- the establishment and funding of the United Kingdom Resource Centre and associated bodies across the four nations to coordinate knowledge and deliver services focused on advancing women in SET careers;

* Issued without formal editing.

- the establishment in 2006 of the Women and Work Commission (WWC) to examine the causes of occupational segregation;
- two successive Gender Equality Public Service Agreements with underpinning targets to increase women's participation in SET and increase apprenticeship opportunities for young women in the construction industries;
- the implementation of the Gender Equality Duty in 2007;
- the priorities of the Olympics Development Agency (ODA) to provide training and employment opportunities for women across the equality strands in under-represented sectors and opportunities arising from the 2014 Glasgow Commonwealth Games; and,
- the provisions within the Equality Act 2010, including public procurement.

5. The priority of the fifty-fifth session of the Commission on the Status of Women provides a timely opportunity to review progress during the last 15 years, to celebrate improvements, identify challenges and policy gaps across the four nations and highlight non-governmental organizations' priorities. It is also a period of change within the United Kingdom. Large scale cuts in public spending as a result of the Comprehensive Spending Review Autumn 2010 and new Coalition Government priorities such as the "Big Society" may have an impact on policy development and resourcing in future years.

6. The Women's National Commission is committed to enabling partners to contribute to the priority theme. In order to stimulate discussion in advance of the fifty-fifth session, the WNC held a partners' event to discuss issues and to inform thinking on the BPfA goal on education more broadly.

7. Partners commented that more needs to be done to encourage girls into science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) subjects and more money needs to be invested in careers advice training. Partners called for more positive depiction of women in STEM careers in the media and more training for teachers in gender-sensitive teaching methods within the education system to challenge the relatively narrow educational and occupational paths for girls and young women. More could be done to challenge gender-specific stereotypes in early education and the role of men and boys as agents of change should be widely acknowledged. Partners highlighted successful initiatives which could be rolled out more widely. For example, "*Take Your Daughter to Work*" days and awards such as "*Champion for Women*" are helpful in embedding good practice.

8. It is reported that gender stereotypes and attitudes play a major part in women's limited participation in STEM. Partners commented that the imminent rise in university tuition fees will lead to even less participation. In the case of medical students debts of at least £50k will be commonplace upon graduation. This could inevitably lead to disproportionately fewer women entering medical and engineering fields. Partners acknowledge that the current economic downturn creates further challenges for STEM industries which inexorably will have a negative impact on women. The *long hours* culture in many STEM industries impacts on caring responsibilities which disproportionately affects women. Partners therefore would like to see a tightening of the perceived *weak* legal regulations on working time in order to protect the health and work-life balance of United Kingdom employees.

9. Debates around maternity leave and effects on small and medium enterprises (SMEs) have been the focus at both national and European Union levels, particularly in light of the recent proposal to extend maternity leave to 20 weeks on full pay by the European Commission. Concern has been expressed by partners that this proposed directive has been deemed "*unaffordable*" by the Government of the United Kingdom in light of the current economic situation. Partners feel strongly that policy should not be influenced by temporary economic downturns. There is also an increased fear that it would also make it harder for women, as SME employers would be less likely to hire those of child-bearing age because of the potential costs they faced if the employee became pregnant.

10. Childcare is widely recognized as the number one barrier to getting into work. Without the presence of quality and affordable childcare, a woman's capacity to maintain their desired level of engagement within the workforce is considered to be increasingly difficult despite an increase in paternity leave provisions. Partners called for more employee incentives to be introduced to assist with childcare. The Trade Union Congress (TUC)[1] has been cited as a model of best practice in this area by offering 50 per cent of childcare costs and 75 per cent for single parents.

11. Confidence skills, lack of training opportunities (particularly for returning and older women) and a lack of women role models in senior positions were recognized as additional barriers and partners have recommended a number of measures to address this including introducing more specialist women's programmes in the workplace and "*back to work*" initiatives. In addition, it was recommended that initiatives developed to address women's multiple identities would be a hugely positive step.

12. Although UKRC SET[2] (and associated bodies in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) and ODA are widely recognized as exemplary in addressing the gender disparity in STEM, partners recommended adopting more best practice examples and positive models from the United States of America and Europe where initiatives to narrow the gap in participation is proving to be successful. The lack of access to start-up grants due to the economic downturn and recent Spending Review could greatly impact on female entrepreneurs. Similarly, a cut in research funding in the United Kingdom and other developed Member States is leading to a "*brain drain*" to boom countries.

What needs to be done now?

13. The WNC welcomes government legislation and initiatives to address the access and participation of women and girls to education, training, science and technology, including for the promotion of women's equal access to full employment and decent work. The WNC recognizes that though the United Kingdom has made steady and exemplary progress in this area, more needs to be done to improve the situation for women and girls and therefore further consideration should be given in a number of areas. Partners would welcome

[1] The TUC is the voice of Britain at work. With 58 affiliated unions representing 6.2 million working people from all walks of life, we campaign for a fair deal at work and for social justice at home and abroad.

[2] The UKRC is the UK Government's lead organisation for the provision of advice, services and policy consultation regarding the under-representation of women in science, engineering, technology and the built environment (SET).

continued enhancement of legislation for flexible working and improved maternity and paternity leave provisions. Partners would like to see the appointment of a "Gender and SET" government champion at ministerial level to drive a cross-governmental and integrated strategy to tackle gender segregation in education, workforce and science policy.[3]

14. Implementing the public sector duties of the Equalities Act, which responds to women's diversity, enables choice and ensures women's roles within the family are compatible with careers and earning a living, and encourages a broad-based culture change which increases men's roles as carers, would also be immensely desirable. Partners would be very receptive to more media and awareness-raising campaigns targeted at parents, children, business and adults to widen occupational aspirations, explicitly break down stereotyping, profile role models and highlight the relevance, variety and excitement of science, engineering and technology.

[3] United Kingdom Resource Centre for Women in Science, Engineering and Technology policy proposals.

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Statement submitted by Women in Law and Development, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.6/2011/1.

10-66844X (E) 050111

Statement*

1. Women in Law and Development in Africa is a pan-African network that brings together 23 African countries,[1] organizations and individuals and employs a variety of tools, including legislation, to promote a culture that fosters the exercise of and respect for women's rights in Africa. The network's vision is of a world in which women are able to enjoy all their human rights.

2. The network welcomes the choice of the theme for the fifty-fifth session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, which will offer an opportunity to raise awareness and strengthen action aimed at ensuring that African women are able to exercise their right to education, participation, training, science and technology.

3. The network is particularly concerned that – notwithstanding the commitments made by States through various international and regional legal instruments, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa and international platforms such as the Platform for Action adopted in Beijing in 1995 – African women and girls generally continue to have less access to education than men.

4. Consequently, illiteracy is still high among women, especially in rural areas, where five to seven in ten women can neither read nor write. Levels of scientific and technical literacy are especially low among women, who are also poorly represented in scientific careers.

5. Education about women's rights – a forceful tool for empowering women and raising public awareness with a view to ensuring women's ability to exercise their right to education – is still the poor stepchild of human rights education and is left mainly to women's rights organizations that have inadequate means to meet existing needs. This situation prevails in a context in which ignorance of women's rights, both among the general public and among women themselves, is one of the primary causes of the violations of those rights and the de facto discrimination that are, in turn, at the root of the poverty suffered by African women.

6. The inability of rural women to exercise their right to education exacerbates their already poor access to agricultural knowledge, science and technology, despite the important role they play in agriculture and food security. As a result, they perform their work under gruelling conditions, are relegated to traditional subsistence farming and are less economically competitive at the local, national and international levels.

7. The network's activities in various countries, especially in West Africa (Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo) have shown that:

- Women farmers who have been educated about their political, civil, economic and social rights have utilized that knowledge for their own economic and

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.

[1] Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mali, Namibia, Nigeria, Mauritius, Senegal, South Africa, Sudan, Swaziland, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Togo, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

social empowerment and have contributed to positive change in their communities, which they have mobilized around issues raised by violations of women's rights;

- Women farmers are aware of their role in regard to involvement in science, technology and research, but face enormous difficulties in participating in activities that are still largely the domain of men who are farm managers and meet requirements with respect to access to land, credit, minimum basic education level and availability to benefit from such activities.

8. Women in Law and Development in Africa,

Determined to work towards a society in which all men and all women enjoy equal rights, particularly in the areas of education, training, science and technology;

Convinced that agricultural knowledge, science and technology can enhance the contribution of African women to agriculture and thus to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, especially those relating to poverty eradication and gender equality;

Calls on:

Official delegations to urge States, with support from development partners, to:

- invest more in the education of women and girls, with special emphasis on training in science and technology to ensure that women as a group benefit from technological progress and are better able to access employment and decent work on an equal footing with men;

- strengthen the capacity of women farmers to participate and to utilize science, technology and research in their work, applying a community-based technology development approach and seeking to create an enabling environment for their effective participation in science and technology activities, including research;

- step up, with the participation of civil society, their human rights education activities, focusing in particular on women's rights, especially in rural areas.

Civil society organizations to redouble their efforts with regard to:

- advocacy activities aimed at promoting State policies and programmes that will create conditions conducive to effective access for women and girls in all social and occupational groups to education and to science and technology and that will respond to literacy needs from a functional perspective, including women's rights;

- women's rights advocacy and education programmes designed to make women and girls in all social and occupational groups, including those in rural areas, aware of their rights with a view to empowering them and enabling them to make a greater contribution to the development of their communities and their countries.

Development partners to: ,

- tailor their development aid to the needs and interests of women and girls in terms of formal and informal education, including education on women's rights and access to science and technology, in line with the Paris Declaration

on Aid Effectiveness, the Accra Agenda for Action and other development financing commitments.

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Statement submitted by the International Planned Parenthood Federation, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Please recycle

Statement*

1. The International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) welcomes the priority theme of the fifty-fifth session of the Commission on the Status of Women "Access and participation of women and girls to education, training, science and technology, including for the promotion of women's equal access to full employment and decent work".

2. Working through 151 Member Associations in 173 countries IPPF is committed to implementing the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing), the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) all of which strive to advance gender equality and empower women. In addition, in September 2010 world leaders pledged to address women's and children's health through the Global Strategy. This involved scaling up and prioritizing a package of high impact interventions and integrating efforts across diseases and sectors such as health, education, water, sanitation and nutrition to promote human rights gender equality and poverty reduction. IPPF recognizes that sexual and reproductive health and rights are central to addressing obstacles related to women's advancement worldwide. These obstacles impede girls' and young women's health and well-being, their ability to participate in education, full employment and decent work as well as preventing the achievement of internationally agreed goals and commitments to gender equality and equitable, sustainable social and economic development.

3. In 2007, 1.3 billion of the 1.5 billion young people aged 12-24 lived in low- and middle-income countries. Some 42 per cent live in poverty and many lack access to basic health services, particularly SRH services as well as to education. Over 500,000 young people are newly infected with a sexually transmitted infection each day (excluding HIV) while over 50 per cent of all new HIV infections occur among young people aged 15-24. Girls and young women bear a disproportionate burden of ill health related to sexual and reproductive health.

4. While all young people have important contributions to make to society, we must ensure that the rights, needs and contributions of young women and girls are prioritized in order to improve health and accelerate development. Many young women have no real opportunity to contribute to their own well-being or to society. They are denied the right to full education and to essential health services. This is not only a denial of their individual human rights but also makes it increasingly difficult for many countries to eliminate poverty and achieve their development goals.

5. IPPF recognizes the link between development and the access and participation of women in education, health and meaningful employment. As per Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, IPPF recognizes that education is a human right and that there is a bridge between education and health which is essential for development at all levels. Research shows that if a young woman delays childbearing until she has achieved her own educational goals, it has broad social and economic benefits, not just for her, and her family, but for society at large. Research demonstrates that an extra year of schooling for girls reduces fertility by 5 to 10 per cent.

* Issued without formal editing.

6. Educated women have more options. Children of educated women are healthier and better educated. It is vital that young women and men and girls and boys have access to comprehensive and gender-sensitive sexuality education in both formal and informal educational settings. This provides knowledge and reduces gender stereotypes and violence against women. This is critical as, for example, up to 32 per cent of all women have been exposed to intimate partner violence during pregnancy, 50 per cent of sexual assaults are on girls under 15, and in South Africa a woman is killed by her intimate partner every 6 hours.

7. Secondary education impacts on health, age of first pregnancy and number of children as well as employment, family income and aspirations. It delays girls' first sexual experience and child bearing and reduces the risk of early pregnancy and maternal mortality and morbidity such as obstetric fistula. The risk of dying from pregnancy-related causes is much higher for adolescents than for older women. Adolescent pregnancy is dangerous for the child too: stillbirths and death in the first week of life are 50 per cent higher among babies born to mothers younger than 20 than among mothers aged 20 to 29. However, approximately 16 million girls aged 15 to 19 give birth every year — around 11 per cent of all births worldwide, the vast majority of which occur in developing countries. Delayed first births, later marriage, birth spacing, fewer healthier babies, and better educated, better fed families, are all largely the result of secondary education and access to family planning services and comprehensive sexuality education. This in turn leads to freedom for further training/education/decent employment, so lifting families out of poverty.

8. Secondary education reduces the incidence of child marriage. Similarly, girls who complete secondary education are much less likely to become infected with HIV. Comprehensive and gender-sensitive sexuality education and information integrated into the curriculum also help to reduce early unplanned pregnancy. The single largest killer of girls and young women is complications from pregnancy and childbirth including unsafe abortion. Over 2.5 million unsafe abortions are carried out every year on adolescent women (aged 15-19) in developing countries. As such there is a clear link between sexual and reproductive health, access to health services, access to education, gender equity, well-being and development.

9. It is vital that the quality and relevance of education are prioritized. Schools must ensure that they do all that they can to retain pupils, especially girls. It is important that girls who become pregnant while at school are not forced to leave. This perpetuates gender inequality, makes pregnancy a detrimental experience, stripping young women of opportunities for social, economic and political empowerment. There are examples of promising policy reform. Pregnant schoolgirls at Pekenene School in Botswana are now allowed to return to school after giving birth. During maternity leave, schoolwork and other resources are sent to girls' homes and the school has developed a curriculum that includes distance education modules. This makes it possible for pregnant girls to continue learning from home instead of being marginalized. On return to school, the girls return with their babies as the school has crèche facilities. The project requires the father, if at school, to share the responsibility of looking after the baby. In Cameroon, girls now have the right to negotiate the duration of their maternity leave with their school, and can arrange for extra classes. Schools also need to ensure that they are safe places for girls — free from harassment from students and teachers, with sanitation and sanitary facilities available. In addition, transport to and from school needs to be safe for girls. These measures reduce absenteeism.

10. There are many other reasons why secondary education should be expanded. It increases more equal opportunities for employment and supports inclusive growth. It is clear however, that boys and young men have far greater access to education than their female counterparts. Already 39 million girls fail to attend primary school. In 2005 only 53 of 171 countries with data had achieved gender parity in primary and secondary education. Of the 113 countries that failed to achieve gender parity in both primary and secondary education by the target date of 2005, only 18 are likely to achieve the goal by 2015.

11. The benefits of educating girls can be clearly seen for them as individuals, for their families, communities and for national development. Closing the gender gap in education adds 0.5 per cent to a country's per capita gross domestic product; each year of schooling increases a woman's income by 10 to 20 per cent. Women return 90 per cent of earnings to families, well above men. Income earned and controlled by mothers has a 20 times greater effect on the health of their children compared with fathers'. Increasing women's economic opportunities — and control of assets — are a path out of poverty.

12. Women's participation in social, economic and human development and benefits are well documented and a proven intervention for health and development. Paragraph 51 of the Beijing Declaration states "Women's poverty is directly related to the absence of economic opportunities and autonomy, lack of access to economic resources, including credit, land ownership and inheritance, lack of access to education and support services and their minimal participation in the decision-making process". This contributes to higher aspirations on the part of their children, economic growth, empowerment and participation including in governance. The percentage of women in governance remains low which in turn impacts on health and education policies, and other policies that would encourage gender equity and participation. In 2009, only 18.5 per cent of parliamentarians were women.

13. Because most unremunerated work takes place within the home, women who undertake such work can become isolated and vulnerable to physical, emotional and/or sexual abuse. It is widely acknowledged that women and girls provide the majority of care to individuals who are living with HIV. This is a substantial responsibility that should be borne by the State. The failure of Governments to provide essential health care and services results in additional domestic burdens for women and girls. Sharing domestic and care responsibilities more equally between men and women is therefore an important means by which to improve the health, well-being and participation of women and girls. Increases in women's education, good sexual and reproductive health including access to family planning and employment not only benefit families but also drive up gross domestic product. An increase of just 1 per cent in the number of girls with secondary education boosts annual per capita income growth by 0.3 per cent.

14. Girls who are educated are more likely to have fewer and healthier children, further apart and be healthy and employed. Access to family planning, information and comprehensive sexuality education prevents early pregnancy and therefore promotes their chance of a full education — a virtuous circle which has been demonstrated to be an extremely effective health and development intervention. Investment in women and girls, in their education, especially secondary education, in their health, especially their sexual and reproductive health and investing in their empowerment and employment drives sustainable social and economic

development. Governments should guarantee access to comprehensive and gender-sensitive sexuality education. Research demonstrates that comprehensive and gender-sensitive sexuality education has a positive impact on young people's sexual and reproductive health and rights including services and contraception to meet unmet need of 215 million women and 1.75 billion young people.

15. It is vital that Governments ensure greater access of girls and young women to education that promotes gender equity. This will include: access to comprehensive and gender-sensitive sexuality education, policies and support that enable married and pregnant students and young mothers to continue their education, learning environments free from gender-based discrimination and violence, specific emphasis on increasing access for girls and young women to secondary education and the meaningful participation of girls, young women and women in the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of educational programmes.

16. For the goals of the ICPD, Beijing and the MDGs to be achieved, investment in the access and participation of women and girls to education, training, science and technology, including for the promotion of women's equal access to full employment and decent work is a prerequisite. Furthermore, the new development framework for 2015 must include meaningful goals related to women's empowerment, human rights, education, health and participation.

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Statement submitted by the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Statement

1. The World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts believes the girl child must be at the centre of efforts to implement the Beijing Platform for Action, and that the access and participation of women and girls in education, training and employment are of crucial importance in ensuring girls and women's equality and empowerment.

2. Eliminating all forms of violence and discrimination against women and girls is an essential prerequisite to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and the successful implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. Yet progress in eliminating discrimination and violence has been at best slow, and at worst, absent.

Agreements and commitments already made

3. The importance of ensuring that girls and young women have access to good quality, non-biased education and training is well documented in numerous United Nations and other reports. As well, the Beijing Platform for Action highlights this need by:

- Asserting the right to education as a human right and an essential tool in achieving equality and in ensuring women can become "agents of change" (para. 69)
- Highlighting that discrimination in girls' access to education persists in many places and that factors such as customary attitudes, early marriage and pregnancy play a part in this, as well as the lack of adequate non-biased, gender-sensitive teaching materials and the risk of sexual harassment (para. 71)
- Highlighting that investment must be made in both formal and non-formal education and training for girls and women (para. 69)
- Asserting that curricula need to stop reinforcing traditional stereotypes and gender biases and instead be sensitive to the specific needs of girls and women, and that lack of education in the area of sexual and reproductive health is damaging for girls and women (para. 74)

4. Millennium Development Goals 2 and 3 also recognize that universal access to primary education and the empowerment of girls and women are of key importance in tackling global poverty and ensuring just and sustainable societies and futures.

5. The importance of eliminating violence and discrimination against women and the girl child is also well documented. The Beijing Platform for Action highlights this need in:

- Asserting that discrimination against women begins at the earliest stages of life and must therefore be addressed from then onwards (para. 38)
- Asserting that violence against women presents an obstacle in achieving equality, development and peace, and that violence against women prevents them from enjoying their fundamental human rights (para. 112)

- Recognizing that violence against women has high social, health and economic costs for society (para. 117)
- Recommending that educational systems must promote self-respect, mutual respect and cooperation between men and women (para. 119)
- Recognizing that the girl child is often discriminated against from childhood and that as a result of this discrimination fewer girls survive into adulthood than boys (para. 259)

6. The United Nations Secretary-General has also made violence against women and girls a priority area in his UNiTE to end Violence against Women campaign, and the formation of the new UN Women entity demonstrates that there is international commitment to end the cycle of discrimination that girls are faced with from birth. However, to date, progress in eliminating violence has been incredibly slow.

Girls suffer disproportionally

7. The World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts recognizes that girls and young women suffer disproportionally in seeking to fulfil their potential and experience a safe and fulfilling life. Access to education and the quality of that education still has a significant gender bias, with girls constituting 70 per cent of the world's 130 million out-of-school children and 42 million fewer girls than boys in primary school. Girls who miss out on primary education grow up to become the women who make up two thirds of the world's 875 million illiterate people and every year of schooling lost represents a 10-20 per cent reduction in girls' future incomes.

8. Restrictive cultural practices limit girls' opportunities, constrain their roles to that of caregiver and domestic helper and put them at risk of illness, neglect and violence. Patriarchal family structures tend to prioritize the needs of boys over those of girls. Economic hardship can mean that many parents co-opt their children, especially girls, as additional labour resources.

9. Even if girls are educated, their earning potential is often lower than that of men as fewer women study subjects that lead to economic success. Women who are in employment still suffer from huge gaps in pay and equal status at work. Women are more likely to be in dangerous, insecure, poorly paid jobs. Technological advances over the last decade have been enormous, yet girls are often the last to benefit and are hugely underrepresented in the areas of technology and science.

10. Other obstacles to girls' education include a shortage of school space, lack of female teachers, long distances to travel, unaffordable fees, lack of sanitary facilities and cultural norms that reinforce women's traditional roles.

11. It is estimated that 60 million girls are assaulted on their way to or from school every year, and that violence and sexual abuse within schools, often carried out by teachers, is a major risk for girls attending school. Violence against girls and young women can also have serious consequences for their health, undermine their self-esteem and reinforce gender biases and cultural stereotypes.

12. This epidemic of violence has been described by the United Nations Secretary-General as one of the most heinous, systematic and prevalent human rights abuses in

the world. Girls are particularly vulnerable to violence, being discriminated against both as females and as children. They are vulnerable to violence in the home and at school, and they are at high risk of harmful practices such as early marriage or female genital mutilation.

Girls are the most crucial constituents for change

13. Yet we know that girls and young women are the most crucial constituencies in our communities if we want to transform opportunities for all and ensure a sustainable future for humankind.

14. More than 600 million girls live in the developing world. Transforming the lives of girls and young women is the beginning of a powerful and sustainable process of change. By taking a life cycle approach and addressing the needs and priorities of girls and young women, adults and older women benefit. By empowering girls and the women they will become, entire families and communities are pushed out of poverty and away from hunger. Educated girls and young women earn more money, start their families later and have fewer children. Empowered and educated girls become women who invest in their families and start a process of education and care that breaks the poverty cycle and changes family and community perceptions of girls from being a burden to being valued and worthy.

15. Despite knowing that investment in girls is the most powerful response to many of the dilemmas facing humankind, international progress in implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and achieving the Millennium Development Goals is slow, and specifically with respect to the girl child, often even slower. Less than half a cent of every United States dollar spent on international assistance programmes is invested directly in girls.

16. And although violence against girls and women is a priority of the Secretary-General and his UNiTE campaign and the elimination of violence against women and girls is recognized as essential in the Beijing Platform for Action, violence against women and girls remains an epidemic: up to 70 per cent of women and girls globally will suffer from violence or abuse in their lifetimes.

Non-formal education empowers girls

17. The World Association believes that non-formal education needs to play a significant role in the way girls and young women are educated and enabled to claim their rights. Non-formal education makes an important contribution to the full personal and social development of an individual.

18. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization definition of education recognizes three distinct types: formal education, informal education and non-formal education; non-formal education is defined as organized educational activity outside the established formal system that is intended to serve an identifiable learning clientele with identifiable learning objectives. According to the United Nations Children's Fund, involvement in girls' organizations over extended periods has a positive impact on girls' civic participation and in counteracting societal pressures.

19. Through its mission to "enable girls and young women to discover their fullest potential as responsible citizens of the world", the World Association is placing the girl child at the centre of the solution. Education and leadership programmes, community action and advocacy campaigns reach out to 10 million girls and young women and their communities in 145 countries.

Call to action

20. The World Association calls on the international community, national Governments and civil society to ensure that girls and young women can grow to fulfil their fullest potential, and highlights the need for them to do more in the areas of education, training and employment and in eliminating violence and discrimination against the girl child. It urges the international community, national Governments and civil society:

- To support organizations involved in the promotion of the education of girls and young women;
- To invest in the education and training of girls and young women;
- To increase political commitment to give women's and girls' education and employment a higher priority;
- To promote the right of all girls to a comprehensive education and the equal importance of education for girls and boys;
- To introduce poverty-reduction strategies to ensure that the right to education is the right of every child;
- To ensure that no girl is at risk of violence as the result of seeking an education;
- To ensure that the learning environment is suitable for girls and that access to sanitary facilities and products are provided;
- To eliminate gender discrimination including through the promotion of educational programmes that challenge traditional attitudes of men and boys towards women and girls;
- To introduce curricula that are gender sensitive and promote equality of boys and girls;
- To provide universal access to basic social and education services;
- To ensure that girls and women have access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights education;
- To recognize non-formal education as a positive method of learning;
- To support the use of non-formal education as a way of providing a participatory learning environment that promotes positive images of girls and young women and that offers the opportunity for girls and boys to gain life skills and make informed choices;
- To commit to making the issue of violence against girls and women, and particularly the issue of violence against girls and young women, a priority;

- To commit to further research into violence against girls and young women and ensure that this is made a priority;
- To ensure the full enforcement of laws that prohibit violence against girls and women.